



Connecticut Working Families Organization
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Testimony from Lindsay Farrell, Connecticut state director of the Working Families Organization.

Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter, and the members of the Labor Committee:

Thank you for holding this hearing today and for giving us the opportunity to speak in favor of several bills. Working Families is a growing progressive political organization that fights for an economy that works for all of us, and a democracy in which every voice matters. We believe that our children's life chances must not be determined at birth, and that America must be a nation that allows all its people to thrive.

Our economy is not working for too many Connecticut workers. Pay is unjustifiably low and workers are insecure. Women and workers of color are hit especially hard by gaps in our policies and the unfair practices of some employers. We would like to submit testimony in support of the following bills, in no particular order:

S.B. No. 747 AN ACT PROHIBITING "ON-CALL" SHIFT SCHEDULING

On the opening day of session, Representative Smith from this committee rightly pointed out that decent, predictable schedules are crucial for safety and to respect everyone's time. We completely agree! Fair scheduling legislation is so critical to improving the lives of working people, particularly lower-wage workers. Nationally, 41 percent of early career workers in hourly jobs receive one week or less advance notice of their schedules, and three-quarters see their hours fluctuate from week to week. Such unpredictability makes arranging child care, building skills through education and training, or simply making ends meet virtually impossible. Through legislation to reign in on-call schedules, workers would be able to plan their lives and their pay.

H.B. No. 5591 AN ACT CONCERNING PAY EQUITY IN THE WORKFORCE

This is pretty basic common sense. In Connecticut Women are paid on average 83¢ to every dollar paid to their white male counterpart for the same work. It gets worse – African American woman are paid only 59¢ and Latinas are paid an astounding 48¢. Annually,

Connecticut women who work full time lost approximately \$5.5 billion in pay¹, which could be supporting their families and being spent in our local economy. Paying two people different amounts for the same work is unjustifiable and we look forward to the specifics of this bill's language.

S.B. No. 1 AN ACT CREATING A PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE SYSTEM IN THE STATE and H.B. No. 6212 AN ACT CREATING A PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE SYSTEM IN THE STATE

Paid family and medical leave is long overdue in this country and in this state. First, to segue from the legislation for pay equity above, we have to address the need for paid leave in any serious, comprehensive agenda to close the pay gap. Women lose 4% of their earning potential with every child that they have because they are fired from their jobs, punished for taking time off, or unable to advance because they leave the workforce and need to start over.²

But equality for women is just one reason on a long list why paid family leave is needed to move Connecticut forward. Too many families are just a couple paychecks away from being unable to pay their bills — a sudden medical crisis or a new child puts most families in the impossible position of having to choose between taking care of themselves and being able to pay their bills.

It is a myth that we are not already paying for this problem. People already have heart attacks and broken bones, children are already being born and adopted. When these things happen families piece together any leave they do have, but they often come up short. They become financially insecure and cannot contribute to the local economy with disposable income. They rely on safety net programs, which our state and federal governments need to pay for. If only they had income replacement and a protected job, they would be financially secure and able to spend on local businesses.

This policy is already in place in Rhode Island and New Jersey, and is being implemented in New York. It is also under consideration in Massachusetts. If Connecticut does not take action to create our own paid family and medical leave program, we will lose even more workers and families to our neighboring states who provide this security. We will also put our small businesses at a regional disadvantage since they will still not be able to offer paid leave to their workers without an additional cost. We are losing residents too quickly to concede this advantage to our neighbors.

Please don't hold our state back and keep punishing our workers for having a family or a medical crisis. Pass paid family and medical leave.

¹ <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/4-2016-ct-wage-gap.pdf>

² http://content.thirdway.org/publications/853/NEXT_-_Fatherhood_Motherhood.pdf